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Author, "Women at the Peace Table"

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WOMEN AND PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

From Dayton to Rambouillet, Arusha to Colombia, it is mainly males who negotiate an end to wars. The justification often given is that the peace table must bring together those who have taken arms, because it is up to them to stop the conflict. While this argument may hold true for negotiations to secure an end to hostilities, it cannot be sustained for the discussions that build the framework for a new society. The process of reconstructing a society emerging from war requires the equal contributions of men and women. Ensuring women's participation in such negotiations enhances the legitimacy of the process by making it more responsive to the priorities of all sectors of the affected population. In this episode of **World Chronicle**, author Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, discusses her book "Women at the Peace Table", published by UNIFEM, the United Nations Development Fund for Women. The book finds that when women do participate in peace talks, they contribute new perspectives and make substantial contributions in the process.

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ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **World Chronicle**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues.

Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is **World Chronicle**.

It is a well-known fact that wars are easier to start than to end. In contemporary civil wars and internal conflicts, violence reaches into homes and villages. Neighbours are pitted against each other and peace cannot be imposed from above. And yet it is predominantly male leaders of the fighting parties who are negotiating an end to war. Left out are the most affected party of the conflict – women. Ensuring women's participation in such negotiations enhances the legitimacy of the process by making it more democratic and responsive to the priorities of all sectors of the affected population. Recently, UNIFEM, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, published a book entitled *"Women at the Peace Table"*. The book, a series of interviews with women leaders, finds that when women do participate in peace talks they contribute new perspectives and make substantial contributions in the process.

Our guest today is the author of *"Women at the Peace Table"*. She is Sanam Naraghi Anderlini. Joining me to talk to Ms. Anderlini are Linda Fasulo of *NBC News* and Alejandra Villasmil of the *Mexican News Agency, Notimex*.

Ms. Anderlini, welcome to **World Chronicle.**

As we've noted in the introduction most of the conflicts now seem to be internal rather than external between nations, how can women be brought more into the peace negotiations in these civil conflicts and what progress has been made so far to get women more involved?

ANDERLINI: As you said, the difficulty is that these are internal conflicts so imposing anything from the outside can be very difficult at times. But of course when you look at most of the situations there is outside intervention in some way or another. For example in.....

LITTLEJOHNS: As for example in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the moment.

ANDERLINI: Right. Or in the Burundi process or in the Middle East or in Northern Ireland, etcetera. So the international community can certainly make a concerted effort to call for the inclusion of women and to have more women on their own peace missions, in their own delegations. And that's something that is still lacking. If you take the case of Bosnia where much of the media attention and the international intervention that came through was to do with assault on women, I mean the fact that women were being sexually abused and raped, there were no women involved in the Dayton Peace Accords. So there is an awful lot that can be done at the international level. And then the issue is at the national level, or the internal level, and that's pretty much where the publication is focused in terms of the efforts that individual women and organizations have made and

the initiatives that have been taken from grassroots and national levels to get themselves at the peace tables.

LITTLEJOHNS: Ms. Anderlini, can you mention any examples where women have actually made a substantial contribution to negotiating peace settlements?

ANDERLINI: I think South Africa is certainly the first to come to mind. The women's political movement was quite strong there during the struggle against...

LITTLEJOHNS: During the apartheid period.

ANDERLINI: That's right. And when they realized that it was coming to a time for negotiations there was a women's coalition that really crossed the bridge between the different sides and they insisted on 50 percent women's representation. And if you look at the South African constitution you will see that really their contributions are very much sort of included there. That there's a lot that's said about equality for everybody and in the aftermath I think that it's interesting to see that the participation of women in the political process and at high levels of government is impressive. I mean of their seven ambassadors to G-7 countries five are women. They have women in the defence ministry.

LITTLEJOHNS: The Foreign Minister is a woman.

ANDERLINI: Yes, exactly. So, you know, that's certainly one case. Guatemala is an interesting case where women were involved in the sort of political delegations that were negotiating the peace and also at civil society level. There was a very strong civil society forum and many of the documents that emerged through the peace agreement came from what were sort of consulted with at that level. And we see that they talked about women's right to land, women's political participation, protection for indigenous women, etcetera. So those are two classic – I mean two very good examples.

LITTLEJOHNS: That's interesting in the case of Guatemala because the perception, rightly or wrongly, probably is that Guatemala is a typical macho country so for women to get involved is really quite a development. How recent is that?

ANDERLINI: Well, again, you know, the war was going on for so long that their involvement has been continuous. It's not that they are there 100 percent or there's gender equality by any means, but the point is that they made an impression and they are very active, politically active women there. Luz Mendez being one of the ones that we interviewed for the publication. Emma Chirix, is a leader of the indigenous movement. And they had a lot of participation in the process because something like 80 percent of the population of Guatemala is indigenous and within that the women, of course, are even sort of more oppressed than anybody else. So it's interesting to see that they made a move and they mobilized and they were able to get their issues on the table and into the national political agenda.

FASULO: In regard to the book can you just share with us a little bit more about who some of these women were and maybe if there are any particular common attributes they may have that sort of bring them to get so involved in the peace process?

ANDERLINI: We tried to interview women from across the world in conflict regions and their backgrounds really varied extraordinarily. Interestingly enough, many were academics. I mean Mary Brownell, who started the Liberian Women's Initiative which I think played a great part in getting the Liberian peace process moving and getting the peace agreement, she was a retired school teacher. And Hanan Ashrawi, of course started... I mean again, she's always been part of the struggle but her professional background was a university lecturer.

FASULO: And she's probably the most visible woman ...

ANDERLINI: She's the most visible, that's right, because she became the spokesperson for them.

LITTLEJOHNS: For the Palestinian Movement.

ANDERLINI: For the Palestinian Movement. But as she says herself, there's many, many women who are active at civil society level in the Palestinian movement. Nani Chanishvili, who is now an MP in Georgia, was also a university lecturer and they sort of mobilized before the war broke out in Georgia and unfortunately were not able to do very much. But it galvanized the women's peace movement there and they now have sort of regional delegations and regional forums both at civil society level and in parliament. So yes, academia is one background which is there. Of the others, as I say South Africa, the woman that we talked to, was part of the political movement most of her life. Burundi, again, one was a lawyer, the other was – I'm not quite sure what she did before but you know, the backgrounds really vary across the board . It's just that I think the message that I certainly got was that there's a point where people just get very tired and very frustrated and you think I have to do something. One of the things that Hanan Ashrawi said was that you either stay a victim or you decide that you're going to change the dialogue and you're going to change the paradigm and you're going to do something. And this is the one thing that there's immense strength in everybody that I spoke to and immense initiative in terms of saying right we have something to say and we're going to say it and we're going to say it now.

VILLASMILL: I guess one of the main challenges women face at the peace table is discrimination by males, what are the experiences of these women dealing with this challenge?

ANDERLINI: Again, very interesting because across the board they talk about exactly the same type of experiences. Whether it's in Guatemala or Cambodia or Georgia they come across similar things. You know, sort of different degrees, I guess. One case was in Cyprus. They were accused of being sexual maniacs, for example or, you know, in Burundi they were told to go home ...

LITTLEJOHNS: Women were accused of being sexual maniacs?

ANDERLINI: For wanting to be involved in peace dialogues

LITTLEJOHNS: Who made that accusation? [LAUGHTER]

ANDERLINI: Exactly. So in Burundi they were told to go back home. That, you know, the issues are being discussed and it's really got nothing to do with them. But what they do and some of the answers that they gave me were along the lines that they prepare themselves a lot more. Again and again people were saying, of course as women we will have to do 200 percent more work than the men to get ourselves there and to make sure that our voices are heard and to be professional and to have the facts at our hands and stuff. The other thing that they do that again comes across very strongly is that because many of them emerge from civil society organizations they really believe in the process of consensus building and participation and transparency. So you see that they are mobilizing at a public level and taking that message to the higher level and then whatever decisions are reached at the higher level taking it back to the public and making sure that there is public ownership. This is something that – I can't say that only women do this but women constantly refer to this as a very important part of the process of being involved in peace talks.

VILLASMILL: Is the lack of experience or preparation, knowledge of these women one of the main points of attacks by men?

ANDERLINI: Well, not necessarily because the men themselves aren't so experienced. It's not as if ...

LITTLEJOHNS: You mean they're not so experienced?

ANDERLINI: The men themselves because they're not all...

LITTLEJOHNS: They're not so experienced?

ANDERLINI: No.

LITTLEJOHNS: Really?

ANDERLINI: Well, because they're not all coming from – they're not all diplomats. I mean we're talking about armed guerilla factions so it's not that the women don't have the ....

LITTLEJOHNS: Maybe they're so dumb that they don't bring women in?

ANDERLINI: Well, I'm not going to say that. You said it. But there is an overbearing sense of discrimination. So what they're saying is that we just have to be that much more prepared and that much more professional and that much more, you know, sort of quick about making things, making our documents available and doing the work. But it's twice as much work. And what we are trying to do – and I think UNIFEM is part of this process and the sort of campaigns that are at the moment working on this level, that there's an international campaign on women building peace that has been launched – is to try and help to build and strengthen the capacities of individual women and women's organizations to be able to participate more effectively in these

processes. As I say, it's not that we don't think that the women have the capacities it's just that they're playing in a very unlevel playing field and the international community needs to help to bring them in there. Once they're there, they're fantastic and this is one of the reasons why they talk about having quotas, both the South Africans and in Palestine, etcetera. They say that quotas just help us to get the women there. When you don't help them they face so many obstacles whereas if you have it at least it's opening the door. And once they're there, you see that most of the women are more capable and more accomplished and more involved than many of the men. But we don't mention it specifically but they talk about the sort of mediocrity of people in political processes and the women that end up getting there often tend to be that much more accomplished.

LITTLEJOHNS: Smart women and dumb men.

ANDERLINI: You say these things. I'm not going to... [LAUGHS]

LITTLEJOHNS: Speaking of the Palestinian women who are actively involved on the Israeli side are women getting involved too?

ANDERLINI: They have been. Again, what is interesting is that we see that women get involved and then at various times in the process, often they get pushed out or they step out because they realize they don't like the way it's going. And in the Israeli/Palestinian situation there were women on both sides who were involved in the preliminary negotiations. Many of them who were there aren't there anymore but they have their own parallel process going. There is an organization called Jerusalem Link which is an Israeli/Palestinian organization and they talk about all the issues that are being talked about at the official talks but coming out with their own sort of ways of fixing them. So they are definitely there on both sides.

LITTLEJOHNS: And of course we should not forget that Golda Meir was the Israeli Prime Minister at one time. Linda, you have a question?

FASULO: Yes. Can you share with us what role women are playing in the Northern Ireland peace process?

ANDERLINI: Northern Ireland again seems to be a case where the women got there and now they're not there in the sort of critical mass that they wanted to be. But what is certainly the case is at the sort of grassroots and community levels, for the ten years running up to the Good Friday Agreement and all the agreements that have since happened, the women were the ones who were changing attitudes. And this is something that Mo Mowlam, who was the Northern Ireland Secretary. mentioned. She said it's very difficult to change political attitudes and by working at that level, whether it's child care or income generation or all sorts of what it means to have your sons lost and things like that, the women were able to change the attitudes. And when it came to the referendum that happened to take the process forward, the women were incredibly active in getting people to vote and getting the sort of agreement to move the process forward. So they're active at the national

community levels and the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, which formed as a political party, has co-representation in the peace delegations and peace talks.

LITTLEJOHNS: This is **World Chronicle**. Our guest is Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, author of *" Women at the Peace Table"*.

FASULO: But you said that women are playing a lesser role today?

ANDERLINI: It's not that they're playing a lesser role per se it's that what happens is that they get there and they're involved but the numbers are still very few. So if you don't have the numbers you just can't be there. You can't be everywhere essentially. But the level of commitment and the work that goes on is tremendous and much of the work is invisible. And this is one of the things that comes across time and time again that in every conflict region you look at women are doing something. Even when you talk about refugees and we say 80 percent are women and children well the women are looking after the children. They're caring for the community, they're caring for the elderly and the victims and trying to rebuild their homes and their communities. And this is all very invisible work that just doesn't get recognized. But that's the essence of reconciliation in peace building.

VILLASMILL: I would like to go from Northern Ireland back to Latin America. You mentioned the case of Guatemala, I'd like to know what has been the process in countries like Colombia, for example?

ANDERLINI: Colombia, we spoke with Senator Piedad Cordoba Ruiz who is a senator and has been very active in both getting the women's voice into the peace talks and also she and her group were the ones who initiated the talks with the guerilla forces. So there's been a lot of involvement there. But again when you look at the official talks processes, and at the moment where there is more international attention being drawn to Colombia, there's no support for the women's involvement and the women are being sort of marginalized once again. But at community levels again they're very active and there is a sort of strong movement there. We just haven't seen or heard much of it at international level because people tend to neglect it for some reason.

LITTLEJOHNS: In another Latin American country, Argentina, women were instrumental in bringing down the military dictatorship, I believe. What can you tell us about that? The background to that one.

ANDERLINI: The little amount that I know about it I think it was very much groups like the mothers of the disappeared who just out stood there and with their placards and their photographs and things. It's interesting because one of the arguments that the people in this field put forward is that women can take action like that because there is such inherent sexism and such stereotyping that politicians will look and say, oh they're just women, they're just mothers, of course they can do. But of course then it becomes a political issue. So they were very strong in that process

and it's not just in Argentina. In Kashmir, in Bosnia, and all these places we have the Women in Black, the Mother's Front, etcetera who are constantly active. Sort of standing anti-military, anti-war movements.

LITTLEJOHNS: Women in Chile, were they active against the Pinochet regime?

ANDERLINI: I can't tell you that.

LITTLEJOHNS: Margaret Thatcher, of course the former British Prime Minister, was a great defender of General Pinochet..

ANDERLINI: Yes, yes.

VILLASMILL: Is there any network, coalition for women in Latin America? I think in Africa there's a big women network that unifies women.

ANDERLINI: There are groups all over. In every region there are networks emerging and there are international networks that are emerging. And one of the great things about having the Internet and having e-mail and things is that it allows an amazing exchange of dialogue, experience exchange, information exchange which is very, very important. And one of the things that, again, UNIFEM and other sorts of civil society groups are trying to do, is strengthen those networks and strengthen their involvement in the various peace movements that are happening. In Africa for example, at the Organization for African Unity, there's now a broader committee on women and peace and they're trying to reach out to the entire continent. One of the things, again, that we are all trying to do, whether it's at the non-governmental organization level or through UNIFEM and some of the UN agencies, is to strengthen these non-government organizations and strengthen the grassroots movements and make available to them the information that they need and to enable an exchange of experience. Because one of the things that we see is that let's say disarmament in Liberia, the process of disarmament in Liberia, may be useful to groups that are trying to achieve this somewhere else whether it's in Africa, the Middle East, or in Latin America. And that's a very effective way of strengthening the women's voice and the women's movement.

FASULO: What more do you think can be done by the international community and women across the world to sort of move the – once the peace has been reached and then you start moving into nation building very often it seems as if things fall apart a little in terms of women's inclusion. What do you think can be done to sort of make that process more equitable as well?

ANDERLINI: At the international level, and where you have international involvement, is to make sure that you have gender sensitive planning processes and that you include local women and local groups and that you have to empower them. Because one of the things that happens is that if you constantly look at women as victims you just end up reinforcing the stereotype and you actually disempower them – the ones who can do something. So one is that to really bring in gender sensitivity and in the whole sort of methodology and the planning of the programmes that

they have and the assistance that they give to make sure that it's very much tailored to the needs of that particular community. In some places it's good to give let's say agricultural assistance and in other places it's other things that they need in terms of economic regeneration. So that's one thing at the international level. And at the national level it's important. And we see this in places like Bosnia that the women are sort of mobilizing and there's greater political consciousness because of what happened to them, unfortunately, and to get into the political processes. And that's something that, again, the international community really should be supporting very much. It makes a tremendous difference to have their voices there at every level and as I say, when you have in a post-war situation like in Rwanda where something like 70 percent of the households were run by women but they had very few rights at the time in 1995, it just seems ridiculous that you're not really supporting the people who are meant to be doing the reconciliation and peace building.

VILLASMILL: Was there any case in East Timor during the conflict in East Timor where women unified and pushed for the peace negotiations?

ANDERLINI: Again, I can't really be specific because I haven't looked at the East Timor situation but I know that in Indonesia there is some movement occurring with some sort of women's involvement. And actually in, I think, the transitional commission that's formed for East Timor, they do have a women's committee within that and they do have women in the Executive Council. I think of the 15 there's something like two women but they do have a separate women's committee and I can't really tell you what you they've done and how much progress they've made.

LITTLEJOHNS: Sanam, let me ask you, do you think that women are less bellicose than men?

ANDERLINI: Not necessarily. I think that, again, from what the women themselves say there's a perception that they get less aggressive when they're involved in negotiations. But having said that I think really it's about how you're dealing with the problems. One of the things that Mo Mowlam was saying is that well, you know, men shout a lot or people shout a lot when they're talking about these things.

LITTLEJOHNS: Well, women shout a lot too.

ANDERLINI: Exactly. When you have lots of men it just seems that men are shouting. But you have to look underneath and see why they're shouting. What is it, you know, what kinds of fears and insecurities, etcetera, are causing that kind of outburst? What Hanan Ashrawi said, and many of the others agreed with, is that women when they get involved in these kinds of negotiation really go to the sort of heart of it. They really want to bring out the truth and they really want to talk about how do we resolve this and move forward for the future for our children and really build peace. And she says that in the Palestinian/Israeli talks they did shout and they did walk out and they did scream and they did cry and all these things but eventually having brought out all the issues,

it was as if, okay, now we're talking. This is what we're talking about I understand your perspective and I understand my perspective let's move on. And it's building on the commonalities. So whether they're less bellicose I would not say but I think that they just bring a different perspective.

LITTLEJOHNS: So far in this programme we have tended to concentrate on women as victims but they're not all victims. I mean some women are on the aggressive side too so what do you think about that?

ANDERLINI: That's right. You can't just say that women are victims and you can't just say that women are naturally peacemakers or peace builders. I mean these are all sort of very basic stereotypes that exist. We know that women fight, we know that women have been involved in inciting violence and things but it doesn't really matter. The point is that they represent over 50 percent of the population, they do bring a different perspective and they have a fundamental right to be there and that right should be recognized . And it's a real deficit to the peace process and the whole democratic process when they're not there because their perspectives, as in every other aspect of life, make a difference. It just adds I suppose rather than take away.

FASULO: Since time is short is there any one thing you feel is important to leave us with?

ANDERLINI: Just this issue needs to be really flagged more significantly. As I say, in every conflict region that you look at we need to get the international community to have in their heads, the delegations and anybody who goes out where are the women, what have they got to contribute and how does this affect them and just bring them in. They have so much to say and often they work at the grassroots levels. They don't have access to the high-level delegation. But the high-level delegations can be pro-active about going and talking to them and bringing them in. So they're an immense resource. It's an immense potential contribution to the building of sustainable peace and it just seems unbelievable that they are constantly being marginalized and excluded.

LITTLEJOHNS: We have less than a minute left. What has the reaction to your book been? Has it been fairly positive? Do you have some positive comments on it?

ANDERLINI: So far, yes. It seems to have – we've been at a meeting at the UN recently and the copies seemed to disappear so I suppose that's a good sign. I hope that it will be widely disseminated. My hope when I was writing it was that this gives a human face to what peace processes are about and the whole issue of conflict and I hope you get a sort of human perspective on what it means for women to be there and it's just a start.

LITTLEJOHNS: Is it going to be issued in all UN languages?

ANDERLINI: I think certainly French and Spanish but I'm not entirely sure what the schedule is for that for by now.

LITTLEJOHNS: And anybody who's interested can write into the UN and get a copy?

ANDERLINI: That's right. From UNIFEM.

LITTLEJOHNS: Ms. Anderlini, that's all the time we have. You've been a very interesting guest. Thank you for being with us on this edition of **World Chronicle**.

Our guest has been Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, author of *"Women at the Peace Table.* She was interviewed by Linda Fasulo of *NBC News* and Alejandra Villasmil of the *Mexican News Agency, Notimex.*

I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle.**

ANNOUNCER: Transcripts of the programme may be obtained free of charge by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to **World Chronicle**, United Nations, Room S-827L, New York, N.Y., 10017.

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